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### General introduction

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## **Introduction: Women in the Medieval World**

Cordelia Beattie

*Key concepts: feminism (first wave, second wave, third wave), gender, sexuality, intersectionality.*

The intention of this collection is to introduce new readers to the classic essays on medieval women as well as the latest scholarly research. The reader will note that the majority of the essays pertain to western Europe and the Christian tradition, reflecting the dominance of those areas in the English-language scholarship to date on medieval women, but there has been an attempt to provide some material on Byzantium and eastern Europe as well as on Jewish and Islamic women in order to enable comparisons. The structure is thematic and, as far as possible, there is chronological (from c.500 to c.1500) and geographic diversity within each of the areas. The key areas discussed in this introduction are similar to, but not exactly the same as, those set out in the volumes as one of the intentions here is to illustrate how the debates in different fields overlap and influence each other. Essays included in this collection are referenced by bracketed numbers within the text.

The earliest essay included in this collection dates from 1968 (44), although there were some important studies conducted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, around the time of the so-called first-wave of feminism.<sup>1</sup> It was in the 1970s and 1980s that scholarship on medieval women really took off, in the United States and the United Kingdom in particular, following on from the second wave of the feminist movement.<sup>2</sup> One of the earliest collections of essays was Rosemarie Thee Morewedge's *The Role of Woman in the Middle Ages*, published in 1975 and based on a conference held in 1972 (31 is from this collection), closely followed by one edited by Susan Mosher Stuard in 1976 and by Derek Baker in 1978 (43 is from this collection).<sup>3</sup> In 1973 the journal *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, itself only launched in 1971, published five papers on women and marriage in the Middle Ages (see 20 and 33 in this collection), arising from a meeting of the Medieval Academy of America in 1972.

The first textbook on medieval women was actually written in Hebrew by Shulamith Shahar but translated into German and published in 1981 as *Die Frau im Mittelalter*, and in English in 1983 as *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages* (a revised edition with a new preface was published in 2003). In the US, feminist medievalists started their own journal in 1986, now known as *Medieval Feminist Forum*, with a Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship following in 1992.<sup>4</sup> In the UK, around the same time, the Gender and Medieval Studies Group began to organize annual interdisciplinary conferences.<sup>5</sup>

By the 1990s, the field was clearly established: in 1993 the Medieval Academy of America devoted an issue of *Speculum* to 'Studying Medieval Women: Sex, Gender, Feminism'.<sup>6</sup> As can be seen in a couple of these last examples, though, the field was also changing from an emphasis on women as women (or 'woman' as some of the earliest works were titled) to a consideration of how gender and sexuality were constructed in different contexts. In particular, third wave feminism's emphasis on intersectionality – how gender intersects with other categories such as 'race', sexuality, age and class – sought to end an essentialist view of what it meant to be a 'woman' in any society.<sup>7</sup>

On that note, it should also be stressed that the above trajectory does not apply to the study of all medieval women. Gavin Hambly used the language of 'becoming visible' for medieval Islamic women as recently as 1999,<sup>8</sup> when this phrase had been applied to women in European history in 1977.<sup>9</sup> As Julia Bray comments, the concept of 'medieval' – the period in between the ancient world and the modern one initiated by the Renaissance – is itself a European one.<sup>10</sup> However, what of the Muslim women within Mediterranean Europe? Although there have been some notable attempts to look at women's interfaith relations (e.g. 28), Monica H. Green introduced the special issue of the *Journal of Medieval History* on this theme in 2008 by commenting that "'mainstream' medieval feminist studies ... have generally used Christian women as the 'unmarked category'".<sup>11</sup>

## Debating Medieval Women

*Key concepts: misogyny; anti-feminism; misogamy.*

It has been a common trend in research on women that feminist scholars first turn to familiar sources and point out the misogynistic ideas embedded in the texts ('misogyny' literally meaning hatred of women but sometimes used to denote ingrained prejudice against women and sometimes rephrased as 'antifeminism').<sup>12</sup> For medievalists the key works usually include the Scriptures, writings of the Church Fathers and ancient Greek medical and scientific works, which continued to have an influence throughout the period (see 1, 2, 20). During the so-called first wave of feminism, the historian Eileen Power set out to demonstrate the inconsistent and contradictory ideas held about medieval women, before arguing that they had little direct effect on women's everyday lives.<sup>13</sup> This was also a key trend during second-wave feminism, as can be seen in Rosemary Radford Ruether's essay on 'Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church' (1).<sup>14</sup> Ruether, along with Mary Daly, was crucial in forming the women's caucus within the American Academy of Religion, at which she delivered a version of this paper.<sup>15</sup> Ruether argued that misogyny and high praise of women were two sides of patristic doctrine, but also that this dualism was common to all ancient religions such as Judaism. For Ruether, this dualism also led to an association between man, the soul and rationality and between woman, the body and emotions (see further 10). Another dualism that we find discussed in the writings of Power and others is the good woman/bad woman: Eve versus the Virgin Mary, the courtly lady or the wanton wench, the woman in the gutter or on a pedestal.

The effect of such ideas has been much debated. For some, 'the discourse of misogyny is a discourse by men, for men, of men', and celibate men at that.<sup>16</sup> Alcuin Blamires argues that misogyny was in part a game, which allowed the intelligentsia 'to show off their literary paces', although he also notes that 'there was too much at stake in this particular debate (apportioning of responsibility for the Fall, for one thing, and woman's continuing exclusion from public office for another) for us to dismiss it as fundamentally unserious'.<sup>17</sup> He identifies four main models of misogynistic writing or antifeminism, one of which was anti-matrimonial polemic aimed to dissuade men from marriage by listing the disadvantages of wives.<sup>18</sup> This model might more strictly be described as 'misogamy', hatred of or aversion to marriage. The most influential example of this, according to Blamires, was 'Theophrastus on Marriage', which was incorporated into Jerome's treatise *Against Jovinian* (c.393). Abelard, in his autobiographical *The Story of My Misfortunes* (c.1132), has his lover Heloise cite this

text, amongst others, as justification for why they should not marry because it ‘sets out in considerable detail the unbearable annoyances of marriage and its endless anxieties’.<sup>19</sup> This scene is then repeated in Jean de Meun’s *Romance of the Rose* (c.1275),<sup>20</sup> a text which prompted debate in early fifteenth-century France not only for its apparent indecency but also, according to Christine de Pizan (1365-c.1430), for its denigration of women.<sup>21</sup> Although one might question if some of the described scene was Abelard’s literary invention given its ‘she said’ format, Heloise confirms that she did hold such views on marriage in one of her letters to Abelard.<sup>22</sup> Barbara Newman (3) argues that there is a strong ‘anti-feminist streak’ in Heloise’s writing, which perhaps explains why she did not feature amongst the exemplary women in Christine de Pizan’s *Book of the City of Ladies* (c.1405), sometimes held up as an early feminist text.<sup>23</sup> It is also worth noting that Newman holds that the late twentieth-century debate about whether Heloise’s letters themselves are ‘authentic’ was at times ‘grounded in ... outright misogyny’.<sup>24</sup> Thus we not only have a comparatively small number of texts being reused in different ways across the medieval period but we also have a debate that continues into the modern era about the nature of women, with women taking part on both sides of the debate.

Recent work, which builds on feminist scholarship that destabilized the category ‘woman’ and explored the discursive construction of gender, challenges the conclusions drawn in earlier studies. For example, Jacqueline Murray cautions that we need ‘to question the hegemony of this ecclesiastical discourse of misogyny’ and look for the diversity of opinion that existed within ‘the Church’ (2); this is a key argument in Fiona J. Griffiths’ article on the reform movement of the central Middle Ages, which examines a religious rhetoric in praise of women (7). One of the examples Murray discusses is the work of the abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), which is also the subject of an article by Joan Cadden (21). Elisheva Baumgarten has tried to problematize the view that medieval Jewish texts were misogynistic and dualistic in her research on motherhood (28). These essays illustrate, as did the earlier one by Vern Bullough (20), that it was not just clerical ideas that influenced the writings about medieval women but also the medical and scientific assumptions of the ancient world.

## **Bodies that Matter and Gendering the Life Course**

*Key concepts: one-sex body; body as situation; life cycle; life course; social adulthood.*

Another recent trend is that which sought to challenge the relationship between sex and gender by arguing that sex was also culturally constructed.<sup>25</sup> For Thomas Laquer, for example, before the eighteenth century male and female bodies were seen as varying points along a male-female continuum that differed only in degree, rather than as binary opposites: the 'one-sex body'. That is, 'there existed many genders, but only one adaptable sex'.<sup>26</sup> Although his key focus was not the Middle Ages, Laquer's main evidence for his pre-modern claims rests on the idea of women as inverted men in book 14 of Galen's *On the Use of Parts*.<sup>27</sup> Bullough also argued that Galen's views of women as men turned inside out was common in medieval thought (20). However, more recent work has challenged this view. Katherine Park, for example, has argued that this was 'a specific idea contained in a couple of paragraphs of a single book of a single work of Galen', written in Greek in the late second century, and that this section of his work had a very spotty transmission history until the early sixteenth century.<sup>28</sup> More common in the medieval period, then, was the idea of two sexes.

In medieval scientific thought, heat was seen as the most fundamental physical difference between the sexes (cf. 21). The superior male was warm and dry, whereas the female was cold and wet. This lack of heat was immediately apparent – it meant the female's reproductive organs were internal rather than external. It also meant females were thought to undergo puberty at an earlier age than males, hence the differences in the ages at which they could marry under canon law (twelve for girls, fourteen for boys). A commentator on the thirteenth-century *On the secrets of women* explained that girls begin to menstruate in their twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth years because 'at this point the heat of childhood begins to fail' and they need to be purged of excess humidity by way of their menstrual periods.<sup>29</sup> For Aristotle, their lack of heat meant that women, like all inferior things, 'reach their end more quickly'.<sup>30</sup> However, Albertus Magnus felt compelled to disagree with Aristotle on this point, commenting that 'the male has a longer life span naturally, but ... the female has a longer life span *per accidens*, because she does not work as hard and thus does not consume so much, and she is cleansed more by the menstrual flow and is less debilitated by sexual intercourse'.<sup>31</sup> This medieval debate was commented upon by David Herlihy in 1975 (31). He linked the change in scientific thought to changes in society and argued that,

while women were more likely to die in childhood in the early Middle Ages, their life expectancies drew even with and then surpassed those of men by the late Middle Ages. This argument inspired further research on sex ratios (including gendered infanticide, migration and health), with attention paid to regional differences and the problems of different kind of source material.<sup>32</sup>

For Monica Green, the history of women's health needs to not be narrowly focused on childbirth but must also attend to gestation, lactation, afflictions of the reproductive organs (such as menstrual difficulties), as well as the same general diseases and injuries that afflict men (22). She has also been key in demonstrating that medieval women's health was not just a matter for women. Indeed, they were increasingly pushed out as healthcare was professionalized.<sup>33</sup> For example, it used to be thought that Trotula was an eleventh- or twelfth- century physician or midwife in the southern Italian town of Salerno who possibly taught at the medical school of the university there (e.g. 20). However, there was no historical woman named Trotula (although she is named in the 'Book of Wicked Wives' discussed in Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* (c.1396), which again draws on 'Theophrastus on Marriage'). There was a woman in twelfth-century Salerno called Trota who was a healer and medical writer. Trotula is rather the documented name for a group of three texts on women's medicine that came out of twelfth-century southern Italy. One of the three texts, *Treatments for Women*, is attributed even in the earliest manuscripts to the healer Trota, although Green argues that Trota probably dictated parts of the work or somehow supervised its production, rather than writing it directly. The other two, *Book on the conditions of women* and *Women's cosmetics*, are anonymous and were probably written by male authors.<sup>34</sup>

For some scholars, it has been important to try to get beyond the discourse of medical theory and understand how medieval people understood their bodies. One of the ideas that has had some currency is that of 'the body as situation', that we all experience our body from the inside but we also experience our bodies in the way others perceive and treat us.<sup>35</sup> Feminist scholarship has paid attention to women's bodily experiences, from menstruation, female circumcision (24), pregnancy and childbirth (27), wet-nursing (28, 29), to the menopause (30), and now disability (57).<sup>36</sup> Within such studies, we can identify some historiographical changes. For example, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber in her 1985 essay on wet nursing, first published in Italian in

1983, argued that for elite Florentine women the hiring of a nurse to suckle her children 'liberated her' from one of two female 'functions', the other being procreation, and thus 'it at least permitted her to enjoy complete liberty during half her life as a fertile woman' (29). This study remains seminal to our understandings of wet nursing but it is also worth noting the very different approach taken in Rebecca Lynn Winer's article on the topic, published in 2008. She discussed wet nursing in the realms of Aragon and the kingdom of Majorca in the late thirteenth century and concentrated more on the exploitation of the nurses than the 'liberation' of the mothers. While Winer did note that some free wet nurses could turn 'the highly disdained work' into some advantage for themselves and their families, many of the nurses she studied were unfree women of Muslim origin. Winer argued that the women were perhaps doubly exploited: first as sexual chattel of their Christian masters and then, having been made pregnant, as nursing mothers for their mistresses' children while their own children were sent away.<sup>37</sup>

In recent years there has been increased attention paid to the concept of the female life cycle, and its constituent stages, as a common thread that can be used to discuss medieval women.<sup>38</sup> Sociologists have criticised 'life cycle theory' for its assumption of a series of fixed stages, which everyone passes through, preferring instead the concept of the 'life course'.<sup>39</sup> However, for Deborah Youngs, the cultural expectation in the medieval period was that people would go through life in a predicted order, exhibiting the appropriate behaviour for each age.<sup>40</sup> The 'ages of man' schema, which divided life into a number of stages, had been inherited from antiquity and was popular in medieval philosophy, science, literature, and art. For example, Isidore of Seville (d. 636) set out six stages in his Latin encyclopedia, *Etymologies: infantia* (infancy, up to age seven; seven was known in Christian culture as the age of reason), *pueritia* (boyhood, up to fourteen), *adolescentia* (adolescence, up to twenty-eight), *iuventus* (youth, up to fifty), *aetus senioris* or *gravitas* (later manhood, up to seventy) and *senectus* (old age, until death). Although the number of stages varied – in the later Middle Ages, the number of stages ranged from three to twelve, with some preference for seven in English writings and ten in German-speaking areas – the conceptual terms used by Isidore were commonly used to discuss life stages.<sup>41</sup> Vincent of Beauvais' mid thirteenth-century encyclopedia, *Mirror of Nature*, set the end of *iuventus* at age fifty, the age at which women were widely believed to stop menstruating in the Middle Ages. As



Shulamith Shahar points out, 'Needing an obvious biological marker for the end of the youthful stage ... and finding none in men but only gradual processes, he used the marker which affected only women to define the end of the stage for all'.<sup>42</sup> However, as Mary Dove comments, 'we need to remind ourselves that "man" in the Ages of Man is not normally an inclusive term'.<sup>43</sup>

The period commonly known as *iuventus*, typically spanning from the mid-twenties to the mid-forties, was usually considered to be the perfect age of man. Indeed, in the Christian tradition thirty or thirty-three was usually said to be the perfect age of the body, depending whether Christ's age when he began his ministry or when he was crucified was adopted as the ideal. Kim M. Phillips has argued that this view did not apply to females and that their 'perfect age' was maidenhood (teens to early twenties), in late medieval England at least. It was a stage in which the maiden was seen as sexually and psychologically mature but she must also hold onto the virginity required by her pre-marital state in order to live up to the ideal of perfect womanhood. Phillips cites as examples of the ideal the many representations of the Virgin Mary as a conventionally desirable young maiden at her death, though she is said to have died at age seventy-two or sixty, and of the virgin martyrs, including St Apollonia who was depicted as an aging matron until the late medieval period (25).<sup>44</sup>

The idea that males and females matured at different ages was a common one, as we have already seen with respect to age at puberty. For Stanley Chojnacki, late medieval patricians in Venice linked the transition into adulthood for women with physiological puberty but for men it was a social puberty, more defined by public roles (26), a concept that is sometimes referred to as 'social adulthood'. However, for both sexes it was a gradual transition that was also affected by marital and social status (the topics of volumes 3 and 4).

## **Women and Religion**

*Key concepts: enclosure; chastity; virginity; beguine; mystic; voices.*

We have already encountered the concept of intersectionality. For the medieval period, a key aspect of a person's identity was their religion: Christian, Jew, Muslim. Further, although these volumes to some extent separate out the religious experience from the

secular, it would be more accurate to see these as intersecting.<sup>45</sup> For example, Radegund (c. 525-87), a princess of Thuringia, was abducted and forcibly married to the Frankish king Clothar I. She lived as one of his wives for about a decade before fleeing the court, becoming consecrated as a deacon (a position that did not require virginity nor widowhood), and using her extensive wealth to found the Abbey of Ste-Croix in Poitiers. By the end of her life, there were around two hundred nuns living in this centre of piety and learning. Popular canonisation swiftly followed her death.<sup>46</sup> Life stage was a key aspect of Radegund's religiosity, as it was for many medieval women who might find their piety constrained by marital demands (see 14, 39). Margery Kempe (c.1373-1438), wife of a burgess in King's Lynn, Norfolk, had to get permission from her husband to take a vow of chastity.<sup>47</sup> Other women managed to contribute to the life of the parish by performing duties in keeping with their household roles such as washing and mending altar cloths and vestments (19). In Byzantium, Judith Herrin argues that women looked after the household's icons (13).<sup>48</sup> And for Renée Levine Melammed, it was women's activities in the home that enabled the continued observance of Jewish laws and rites after Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 (18). Recent scholarship on women and religion, then, has emphasized domestic piety.<sup>49</sup>

For those women who did take religious vows, enclosure was a key feature. As both Jane Tibbetts Schulenberg and Alice-Mary Talbot point out, monasteries (and I use the term here to denote both male and female houses) were designed not only to keep monks and nuns contained within but were also designed to keep others out (5, 6); Julia H. Smith comments on how men's houses might forbid female visitors from visiting relic shrines (12). Schulenberg emphasizes, though, that more emphasis was put on 'the ideal of strict, unbroken claustration' for women because their chastity needed particular protection. Jo Ann McNamara agreed that chastity (being sexually inactive for moral reasons) was a defining feature for religious women, in a way that it was not for men (4); the emphasis on virginity is another area where the divide between religious and secular women breaks down (see 25).<sup>50</sup> McNamara added that male fear of female autonomy was one of the factors that drew religious men back to the *cura monialium* (cf. 7).

Enclosure was also about renouncing money and property as well as sex and family. In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries there were new movements that sprang up, based around *imitatio Christi* (voluntary poverty, religious devotion,

care of the poor and sick). Claire of Assisi (1194-1253) was one of the first followers of Francis of Assisi and she was involved in founding the Order of Poor Ladies (later known as the Poor Clares), a monastic religious order for women in the Franciscan tradition.<sup>51</sup> However, other women found a way of following these models while remaining in the world.

One well-known example was Marie d'Oignies (1176-1213), whose life was written by her confessor, Jacques de Vitry. Like Margery Kempe, Marie persuaded her husband to also take a vow of chastity and together they dedicated their lives to charitable work with the lepers of Williambroux. Jacques de Vitry recorded her ascetic practices, which took the form of extreme fasting and mortifying her flesh in acts of penance. He also recorded her many visions from God, in which He appeared in various forms, such as a baby for her to look after or an adult male whom she married and with whom she shared a bed.<sup>52</sup> Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) refused to marry but did not take up the veil. She lived according to the ideals of the Dominicans while remaining in the world (a tertiary). Catherine was known for her acts of charity (such as giving away her family's clothing and food without permission or looking after the sick), extreme fasting, and visions, including a mystical marriage to Jesus, which she described in her letters.<sup>53</sup> Such charitable acts, asceticism, and visions are key features of medieval mysticism, which is particularly associated with women in both the Christian and Islamic faiths (10, 11).

For Caroline Walker Bynum, a key element in these women's lives, which associates them with other religious women from thirteenth to fifteenth century Europe, was their renunciation of food (10).<sup>54</sup> Bynum argued that extreme fasting was a more common feature in the lives of female saints, in part because this was one resource they had control over and in part because of the cultural connections made between women and the body (discussed above). Ida of Louvain (d. c.1300) was similarly said to subsist for various periods of time on nothing but the Eucharist, the body of Christ. According to Ida's *vita*, although she later became a Cistercian nun at the monastery of Roosendaal, some of her religious life was spent living at home with her father (who was not supportive of her vocation), and she spent time with beguines in a nearby Dominican church.<sup>55</sup> Beguines were women who did not take formal religious vows but lived lives of active and contemplative piety (discussed in 57). They sometimes lived in semi-monastic communities of varying sizes but they also

sometimes lived alone. They defy easy labelling, then and now. Jacques de Vitry's account of Marie of Oignies helped gain papal approval for the beguines but Marie should not be seen as a 'typical' example, nor should we conflate the categories of beguine and mystic.<sup>56</sup> Julian of Norwich (c.1342-1416) was a mystic and anchorite; we do not know much about her life before she moved to a cell built onto the wall of the Church of St Julian in Norwich but we know that she had a series of sixteen visions about Jesus Christ as she wrote about them in the *Revelations of Divine Love*.<sup>57</sup> As these examples illustrate, women's religious lives defy easy categorization as lay or religious, or as virgin, chaste wife, beguine, mystic, anchorite or nun.<sup>58</sup>

A key debate in discussions of religious women has been whether we can recover authentic women's voices from the surviving sources. As discussed, Catherine of Siena and Julian of Norwich could and did write, whereas other women are studied only from the Latin *vitae* written by male supporters. Catherine Mooney emphasizes the distortion of the male influence, whether as scribe, translator, or spiritual advisor.<sup>59</sup> June Mecham adopted a different position. In her 2003 article Mecham argued that we can access individual spiritual concerns, for example, by looking at women's involvement in book production and, in particular, the variations in content and arrangement in three prayer books from the former Cistercian convent of Wienhausen in Lower Saxony (9). This was also an attempt to discuss 'ordinary' nuns rather than the 'exceptional' saints and mystics. As Peter Biller pointed out in 1990, 'the exceptionally religious, the nuns, Beguines, and anchoresses', are a tiny fraction of all women but they are the religious women who are usually in view (15).

Biller's essay, 'The Common Woman', was an attempt to discuss what evidence the historian might use to access the religious views of 'the millions of others who are not in view' (15). One of his suggestions was miracle stories, a source which Sharon Farmer used to discuss poor Parisian women, including the support that they received from charitable institutions (57). Another source Biller suggested was inquisition trials, which he argued reveal much about orthodox Christian belief and practice. This was also Melammed's approach to the records of the Spanish Inquisition, although her focus was on Jewish beliefs, practices and attitudes; crypto-Jew is the term historians use for someone who secretly continued to maintain some Jewish practices while publicly adhering to another faith (18). It is also the 'ordinary' lay woman, albeit from different

places in different periods, that Smith, Herrin and Katherine French are trying to access in their essays (12, 13, 19).

Others have used inquisition records to look at the involvement of women in groups labeled by the Church as heretical. While some early studies of women's involvement with heretical groups echoed the orthodox sources in their claims that women were particularly attracted to such groups, other scholarship has disputed this. In 1979 Richard Abels and Ellen Harrison analysed more than six thousand depositions as recorded primarily in a mid-thirteenth century inquisitorial register from southern France and found not only that women were less likely to be in the spiritual elite, the 'perfects', of the Cathar sect (45% to 55%), but that those who were found there were much less active and visible than their male counterparts (1 in 5 mentions).<sup>60</sup> For Biller, this is less surprising if one rejects the contemporary misogynistic explanations that women were more credulous and so susceptible to heresy, and instead factor in the Cathar abhorrence for the female flesh (15).<sup>61</sup> Shannon McSheffrey performed a similar analysis for the late medieval English heresy of Lollardy when she questioned earlier studies that had argued that women's role in Lollardy exceeded that attained by women in orthodoxy (16). She found that Lollardy reproduced mainstream gender hierarchies and women were most likely to join as wives of other Lollards.<sup>62</sup>

## **Women, Power and Agency**

*Key concepts: rulership; regents; consorts; public/private; power; agency; negotiation; resistance.*

Early studies on medieval women and power focused on queens, empresses, and important noblewomen and these are still lively areas of research, clearly influenced both by new approaches in gender history and by scholarship on how power operated in pre-modern societies.

Marion Facingier's article of 1968 lamented that while a few queens had received biographical treatment, there had been no 'attempt to analyze queenship as an office' (44). If we jump forward to 2007, Theresa Earenfight comments that, 'there are many studies about individual queens but few about the institution of queenship'.<sup>63</sup> To some extent this is due to the strong links between queenship research and feminist and

gender scholarship. Queens have been studied, for example, in terms of marriage, motherhood, sexuality, and ritual (see 46).<sup>64</sup> For Earenfight, more work is needed on queens as a key component of medieval rulership in general; she comments on the gendered use of language that leads us to refer to a 'female monarch' but to a king rather than a 'male monarch'.<sup>65</sup> There has also been a recent trend in studies on aristocratic women to discuss 'lordly women' as a way of connoting that women could exercise power as lords, a term often assumed to be gendered male (see 48).<sup>66</sup> Rulership, as well as being a non-gendered term, lends itself to include other forms of power. For example, in Byzantium the ruling figure was an emperor or empress (see 45).<sup>67</sup> The scholarship on female rulers has also tended to cohere around regional divisions as different areas had different rules about how power was gained. Some women inherited it, although they were in the minority even in places which allowed this;<sup>68</sup> Empires did not and nor did France after 1316 when the so-called Salic Law, which prohibited female inheritance, was invoked. Other women ruled as regents (on behalf of an underage son or grandson), or as consorts (wife of the ruler).<sup>69</sup> Recent scholarship tends to emphasize the partnership between king and queen as a key element of medieval rulership and to see the conjugal family as the key to women's power.<sup>70</sup>

One of the significant features of early studies on women and power was the recognition that a division between the public and the private was not particularly useful. As Janet Nelson pointed out, the organisation of the royal household often fell to the queen and was a key political function (43).<sup>71</sup> This has implications for our understanding of what constitutes 'political power'. In pre-modern societies, political institutions themselves might be rudimentary and power might lie in the communications, often ritualized, between various groups. The role of intercessor, for example, has been emphasized as a key one for queens,<sup>72</sup> but once we accept power was more diffuse then other women could also participate in the political process.

In 1988 Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski published a collection of essays on *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*. Their intention was to offer a broader definition of power than that which equated it with public authority ('the ability to act effectively, to influence people or decisions, and to achieve goals').<sup>73</sup> Essays examined the influence of women of various social groups, from the economic power of English peasant women to the cultural power of the wives of Venetian patriarchs. When they revisited the

themes in their 2003 collection, *Gendering the Master Narrative*, they suggested that this use of the term 'power' was now more commonly referred to as 'agency', although this might be swinging back.<sup>74</sup> Whether we call it power or agency, what the project was - in 1988, in 2003 and in 2016 - was an attempt to bring into view women who did not hold public power and to look at how non-elite women might act in ways that affected themselves and others.<sup>75</sup>

One key source for studying both elite (49, 50) and non-elite women's exercise of power has been the records of various law courts. For example, Carol Lansing uses court records from thirteenth-century Bologna to argue that the fewer economic resources women had, the more aggressively they had to defend their interests, inside and outside of court (42). Dana Wessell Lightfoot uses civil court cases and notarial records from fifteenth-century Valencia to argue that women who worked as servants prior to marrying had more agency in contracting their marriages than elite women (34); P.J.P. Goldberg made a similar argument for late medieval York (55).<sup>76</sup> Lightfoot uses the anthropologist Sherry Ortner's concept of 'agency of intentions' to show how women *negotiated* patriarchal structures; she sees this as distinct from an understanding of agency which required agents to *resist* dominant structures. Lightfoot and Marie A. Kelleher discuss cases in which wives sue their husbands for financial support or return of their dowries. Kelleher has examples of cases in which women did this in order to protect the marital property from creditors, which leads her to argue that women were 'active participants in the construction and refinement of ... gendered legal discourse' (36). Sara Butler uses legal records from late medieval England to highlight cases of wives who refused to stay in unsatisfactory marriages (37). While Yossef Rapoport does not have any legal records for late fifteenth-century Cairo, he makes use of a collection of biographies of women that was compiled at the time in order to assess women's role in divorce and finds that they 'stand out for their proactive and independent agency' (38). It should also be noted that there have been studies that seek to emphasize the constraints placed on women's lives (e.g. 39, 56).

### **Continuity or Change?**

*Key concepts: golden age; change for the better, change for the worse, change without transformation; patriarchal equilibrium; periodization.*

As Judith M. Bennett argued in 1992 (61), the popular perception of the Middle Ages is of a backwards and brutal era and thus a terrible time for women, with steady progress in women's status ever since. However, she also noted that the dominant professional interpretation was more of a U-shaped or J-shaped model, with women's status declining between the Middle Ages and the present before recovering (as in the U-shaped model) or exceeding the medieval position (as in the J-shaped model). This is the argument of the Middle Ages harbouring a 'golden age' for women, when men and women were in many respects equal.

'The Middle Ages' is of course a capacious term. It is often divided into three periods: the early middle ages (c.500-1000), the central middle ages (c.1000-1300), and the late middle ages (c.1300-1500). One dominant paradigm in the study of women in the medieval West is that there were opportunities for women in the early period, which declined in the central middle ages. For example, in 1962 David Herlihy argued that in the early Middle Ages aristocratic women benefited from a family system that valued kinship over lineage and a legal system that offered women considerable rights of inheritance, and that their importance was 'particularly pronounced after 950 ... reaching a sort of apex in the eleventh century'.<sup>77</sup> In 1968 Marion Facinger (44) argued that early Capetian queens, with Adelaide of Maurienne (queen consort 1115-37) being the high point, enjoyed powers that later queens, including Eleanor of Aquitaine (queen consort 1137-52), lacked. These suggestions of a change for the worse in the twelfth century were given wider purchase with an important article by Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple, first published in 1973. Like Herlihy, they argued that in the early middle ages aristocratic women encountered few structural barriers to the acquisition of power, with the exception of the priesthood. However, this was to change by the twelfth century; their thoughts on the evolution of a dowry system were subsequently strengthened by Diane Owen Hughes' article on the topic (32), which argued that a shift from 'morgengabe' (a marriage gift which the wife controlled) to a dowry (which the husband managed) entailed a loss in women's control over property (cf. 36).<sup>78</sup> While Georges Duby did not initially pay attention to the effect on women, his thesis - that there was a transformation of the aristocratic family in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries as primogeniture replaced partibility as the favoured form of inheritance, in order to consolidate wealth and power in the patrilineage<sup>79</sup> - cast a long shadow over



studies on aristocratic women in the central Middle Ages, particularly in France, which the 1999 collection of essays edited by Theodore Evergates sought to rebut (see 47).<sup>80</sup> McNamara herself revisited the argument in 2003 and, while conceding that it was unlikely that there was such an abrupt change in family development, she still maintained that 'women were disadvantaged by the development of more centralized states, a more hierarchical church, and an urban society based on the money economy'.<sup>81</sup>

As the McNamara quotation hints at, similar paradigms of 'change for the worse' have operated in different areas of the study of medieval women, such as that focused on women and the religious life. The traditional view was that while religion was a source for authority for some women in the early Middle Ages - such as the abbess Hilda of Whitby (c.614-80), who presided over monks as well as nuns - women's contributions were marginalized in the newer movements of the central Middle Ages. However, much recent work has challenged this trajectory. For example, was there a decline in the numbers of cloistered women in the central Middle Ages (as argued in 5) or is it just that earlier editors had published more documents about men's houses?<sup>82</sup> Recent archival scholarship has found a growth of women's abbeys in Europe in this period and that these houses were not always poorer than male ones (8).<sup>83</sup> Similarly, we should not assume that all clerics were influenced by a misogynistic tradition that nuns' prayers were less efficacious than those of monks; Fiona J. Griffiths argues that some priests sought out the care of nuns' souls in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries because they valued their prayers more highly (7).<sup>84</sup>

One relatively early voice of dissent was that of Pauline Stafford who, in 1993 (59), discussed and countered scholarship from the late eighteenth century onwards that saw the early middle Ages, particularly Anglo-Saxon England, as a 'golden age' for women. As she points out, such golden ages are often constructed in order to castigate a previous or subsequent era, whether it be the Roman world, post Norman Conquest England or late nineteenth-century America. This, therefore, is a problem not only confined to the Middle Ages. Olwen Hufton complained in 1983 that the task of finding a '*bon vieux temps* when women enjoyed a harmonious, if hard-working domestic role and social responsibility before they were downgraded into social parasite or factory fodder under the corrupting hand of capitalism', had been foisted onto early modern historians by feminist scholarship on the nineteenth century.<sup>85</sup> For Amanda Vickery, the

‘compelling vision of a pre-capitalist utopia, a golden age for women’, constructed by socialist writers and the first generation of female professionals in the nineteenth century, was accompanied by ‘a social, cultural and economic transformation so abstract that it could be applied to almost any region or historical period’.<sup>86</sup> She cites classic works by scholars such as Alice Clark and Ivy Pinchbeck. Of more relevance for us is the medieval scholar and peer of Clark’s, Eileen Power (mentioned earlier). Power was working on a book on medieval women in the immediate aftermath of the First World War and some of her work on this topic was posthumously edited by her husband, M.M. Postan.<sup>87</sup> Power argued that the position of women in medieval society was:

one of rough and ready equality. For in daily life man could not do without woman; he relied on her for the comfort of his home, and much more than at many other periods in history he relied on her to look after his affairs in his absence from home.<sup>88</sup>

As Maxine Berg comments, Power’s ‘evidence was weakest here, and she was looking through tinted glasses in thinking that the social status of women within their households would reflect recognition for their equal contribution in the workplace’.<sup>89</sup> But this is a view that persisted for some time.<sup>90</sup>

Jeremy Goldberg has recently argued that the ‘golden age’ concept is a construction imposed from without in order to discredit an opposing approach. He attributes the linking of his and Caroline Barron’s work with a ‘golden age’ thesis to Bennett’s 1992 essay (61), which was then picked up by Sandy Bardsley (52) and others.<sup>91</sup> Barron had used the term in inverted commas in her title but not in the essay itself.<sup>92</sup> Goldberg’s argument in brief (as made in 1986) was that after the Black Death women were drawn into towns to meet the needs of a labour-starved economy, perhaps predominantly to work in service. He argued that it was perhaps in the early fifteenth century that women saw most opportunities, in northern England at least, as in the early stages of economic recession female workers (traditionally paid less than male workers) might be more in demand.<sup>93</sup> However, by the late fifteenth century – as the recession deepened – male workers sought to protect their own positions by forcing women into marginal and exclusively female trades (see 55).<sup>94</sup> His stance on women’s work in late medieval England is not radically different from Bennett’s, then, although

he and Barron did place more emphasis on the temporary 'change for the better' in women's opportunities after the Black Death.

In response to narratives of an improvement or decline in women's status, Judith Bennett has offered the concept of 'change without transformation or a 'patriarchal equilibrium'. That is, women's experiences might have changed but their status was not transformed. For Bennett, 'changes which undermined the force of patriarchy in one sector could be countered by responses in other sectors' so that male authority over women was maintained.<sup>95</sup> The case study she has offered is that of brewsters (female brewers) in late medieval England. Women controlled a trade, brewing, which was suddenly becoming very profitable. The response was to denigrate brewsters in poems, plays and other cultural media, civic regulations were passed to prevent single brewsters taking work away from married men, and husbands started to assert their authority over wives in new ways. These changes in ideology, law, politics and family countered the economic change that might have advantaged women.<sup>96</sup> Bennett's arguments about continuity have been seen by some as a radical challenge to the business of history to discuss change over time.<sup>97</sup>

Joan Kelly in a ground-breaking essay, first published in 1977, asked 'Did women have a renaissance?'. Kelly did not challenge the importance of the Renaissance as a historical period as such, but rather asked if it had any real effect on women.<sup>98</sup> For Bennett, this is 'an inverted synchronization', rather than a rejection of periodization.<sup>99</sup> While many do not now agree with the detail of Kelly's argument, the question format itself has proved enduring.<sup>100</sup> Witness Phyllis Culham's 1997 essay 'Did Roman Women have an Empire?' and Julia Smith's 'Did Women have a Transformation of the Roman World?' (58), published in 2000.<sup>101</sup> For Smith, the key point is not what effect the transition from antiquity to the middle ages had on women, but on how attention to women and gender can enhance understanding of the transition from antiquity to the middle ages. She argues that women and men should not be studied separately as changes that affected women (regarding gender ideologies, marriage, property law, domestic space) all affected men too. Susan Mosher Stuard's seminal article of 1995 argues that an emphasis on women might change historians' views of past events, such as the apparent demise of slavery in the medieval West (60). While Jean-Pierre Devroey, with a particular focus on the ninth-century Frankish region, has since challenged some of Stuard's conclusions, he did still keep the question of gender difference in view (51).

The essays that make up this collection, then, give an indication of how much work has been done on women in the medieval world, how this work has reshaped our views of the medieval period as a whole, and the vitality of the field in which critical concepts are used to posit theories and to challenge them.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Florence Griswold Buckstaff, 'Married Women's Property Rights in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman Law and the Origin of the Common-Law Dower', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 4 (1893), 233-64; Elizabeth Dixon, 'Craftswomen in the *Livre des Métiers*', *Economic Journal*, 5 (1895): 209-28; A. Abram, 'Women Traders in Medieval London', *Economic Journal*, 26 (1916), 276-85; Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries, c. 1275 to 1535* (Cambridge University Press, 1922).

<sup>2</sup> For discussion of why this might have been and some consideration of the situation in various European countries see Miri Rubin, 'A Decade of Studying Medieval Women, 1987-1997', *History Workshop Journal*, 46 (1998), 213-39, esp. pp. 226-30; Susan Mosher Stuard (ed.), *Women in Medieval History and Historiography* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Rosemarie Thee Morewedge (ed.), *The Role of Woman in the Middle Ages* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1975); Susan Mosher Stuard (ed.), *Women in Medieval Society* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976); Derek Baker (ed.), *Medieval Women: Essays Presented to R. M. T. Hill*, Studies in Church History, Subsidia 1 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> For both see <http://smfswweb.org> (accessed 4 September 2015).

<sup>5</sup> See <<http://www.medievalgender.co.uk>>: 'oral history suggests that it was running in 1987 at the latest' (accessed 4 September 2015).

<sup>6</sup> *Speculum*, 68:2 (1993). Also published as Nancy F. Partner (ed.), *Studying Medieval Women: Sex, Gender, and Feminism* (Medieval Academy of America, 1993). On dissatisfaction with this special issue see Rubin, 'A Decade of Studying Medieval Women', p. 226.

<sup>7</sup> The term 'intersectionality' was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989), 138-67.

<sup>8</sup> Gavin R.G. Hambly, 'Introduction. Becoming Visible: Medieval Islamic Women in History and Historiography', in his (ed.), *Women in the Medieval Islamic World* (Macmillan, 1999), pp. 3-27. An important forerunner to his collection was Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (eds), *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (Yale University Press, 1991); see essay 17 in this collection.

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- <sup>9</sup> Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (eds), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Houghton Mifflin, 1977).
- <sup>10</sup> Julia Bray, 'Introduction', in her (ed.), *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam: Muslim Horizons* (Routledge, 2006), p. xi.
- <sup>11</sup> Monica H. Green, 'Conversing with the Minority: Relations among Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Women in the High Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval History*, 34:2 (2008), 105-118, p. 107.
- <sup>12</sup> For the term 'antifeminism' see, e.g., Alcuin Blamires (ed.), *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford University Press, 1992), passim. It is used alongside 'misogyny' but more frequently; the reverse is the case in R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (University of Chicago Press, 1991).
- <sup>13</sup> See Eileen Power, *Medieval Women*, ed. M. M. Postan (Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 9-34, but she first published a version of this as 'Medieval Ideas about Women', *Cambridge Magazine*, 2, 9 November 1918.
- <sup>14</sup> See also Elizabeth A. Clark, 'Devil's Gateway and Bride of Christ: Women in the Early Christian World', in her *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), pp. 23-60, esp. p. 24; Judith M. Bennett, *Medieval Women in Modern Perspective* (American Historical Association, 2000), pp. 5-6.
- <sup>15</sup> See Ann Loades, 'The Virgin Mary and the Feminist Quest', in *After Eve: Women, Theology and the Christian Tradition*, ed. Janet Martin Soskice (Collins Marshall Pickering, 1990), pp. 156-78, reproduced online at <http://www.womenpriests.org/theology/loades.asp> (accessed 13 August 2015).
- <sup>16</sup> R. Howard Bloch, 'Commentary', *Medieval Feminist Newsletter*, 7:1 (1989), 7-12, p. 10, online at <http://ir.uiowa.edu/mff/vol7/iss1/3/> (accessed 5 May 2016).
- <sup>17</sup> Blamires (ed.), *Woman Defamed*, pp. 12, 13.
- <sup>18</sup> Blamires (ed.), *Woman Defamed*, pp. 10-11.
- <sup>19</sup> Blamires (ed.), *Woman Defamed*, p. 88.
- <sup>20</sup> Blamires (ed.), *Woman Defamed*, pp. 153-4.
- <sup>21</sup> Blamires (ed.), *Woman Defamed*, pp. 286-9.
- <sup>22</sup> Betty Radice (trans.), *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, revised by M. T. Clanchy (Penguin, 2003), p. 51. Abelard's views on religious women are discussed in essay 7.

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<sup>23</sup> E.g. Joan Kelly, 'Early Feminist Theory and the *querelle des femmes*, 1400-1789', *Signs*, 8 (1982), 4-28; Earl Jeffrey Richards *et al.* (eds), *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan* (University of Georgia Press, 1992), section 1; Roberta L. Krueger, 'Towards Feminism: Christine de Pizan, Female Advocacy, and Women's Textual Communities in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond', in Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 590-606.

<sup>24</sup> Blamires (ed.), *Woman Defamed*, p. 87 assumes they were authentic but leaves open the question that they might be forgeries, but Newman's article (3) which appeared in the same year clearly demonstrates that they were written by Heloise.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1990). Butler updated her views on the materiality of the body in her *Bodies that Matter: On the discursive limits of 'sex'* (Routledge, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Laquer, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Harvard University Press, 1990), quotation at p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> See Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science and Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), for evidence of alternative models circulating in the medieval period. For a case study see essay 21 in this collection.

<sup>28</sup> Katherine Park, 'Cadden, Laquer and the "One-Sex Body"', *Medieval Feminist Forum*, 46:1 (2010), 96-100, quotation at p. 99, online at <http://ir.uiowa.edu/mff/vol46/iss1/10> (accessed 25 August 2015). Park's views are also discussed in Monica H. Green, 'Bodily Essences: Bodies as Categories of Difference', in Linda Kalof (ed.), *A Cultural History of the Human Body in the Middle Ages* (Berg, 2010), pp. 149-71, esp. pp. 154-5.

<sup>29</sup> Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, *Women's Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus's De Secretis Mulierum With Commentaries*, ed. Helen Rodnite Lemay (State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 70.

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck (London: William Heinemann, 1943), p. 461.

<sup>31</sup> Albert the Great, *Questions Concerning Aristotle's On Animals* (Fathers of the Church: Medieval Continuation, Vol. 9), trans. Irvén M. Resnick and Kenneth F. Kitchell Jr. (Catholic University of America Press, 2008), pp. 449-50.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. Vern Bullough and Cameron Campbell, 'Female Longevity and Diet in the

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Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 55:2 (1980), 317-25; Carol Clover, 'The Politics of Scarcity: Notes on the Sex Ratio in Early Scandinavia', *Scandinavian Studies*, 60:2 (1988), 147-88; Peter Biller, *The Measure of Multitude: Population in Medieval Thought* (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 292-4; Sandy Bardsley, 'Missing Women: Sex Ratios in England, 1000-1500', *Journal of British Studies*, 53:2 (2014), 273-309.

<sup>33</sup> Monica H. Green, *Making Women's Medicine Masculine: The rise of male authority in pre-modern gynaecology* (Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. ch. 6. See also Carmen Caballero-Navas, 'Medicine and Pharmacy for Women: The Encounter of Jewish Thinking and Practices with the Arabic and Christian Medical Traditions', *European Review*, 16:2 (2008), 249-59; Montserrat Cabré, 'Women or Healers? Household Practices and the Categories of Health Care in Late Medieval Iberia', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 82 (2008), 18-51.

<sup>34</sup> Monica H. Green, 'The Development of the Trotula', *Revue d'Histoire des Textes*, 26 (1996), 119-203; Green, *Making Women's Medicine Masculine*, ch. 1.

<sup>35</sup> The concept is from Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, ed. and trans. H. M. Parshley (Penguin, 1972), p. 66; first published as *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949). It is discussed in Toril Moi, *What is a Woman? And Other Essays* (Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 59-72, where she also aligns it with 'lived experience'. For the medieval period see Felicity Riddy, 'Looking Closely: Authority and Intimacy in the Late Medieval Urban Household', in Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (eds), *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 222; Green, 'Bodily Essences', p. 149.

<sup>36</sup> For an annotated bibliography of works on such topics published before 2010, see Monica H. Green, 'Bibliography on Medieval Women, Gender, and Medicine (1985-2009)', online at [http://www.sciencia.cat/biblioteca/documents/Green\\_CumulativeBib\\_Feb2010.pdf](http://www.sciencia.cat/biblioteca/documents/Green_CumulativeBib_Feb2010.pdf) (accessed 20 August 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Rebecca Lynn Winer, 'Conscripting the Breast: Lactation, Slavery and Salvation in the Realms of Aragon and Kingdom of Majorca, c. 1250-1300', *Journal of Medieval History*, 34:2 (2008), 164-84, quotation at p. 170. The sexual exploitation of female slaves is also discussed in essay 60.

<sup>38</sup> See, e.g. Patricia Skinner and Elisabeth Van Houts (ed. and trans.), *Medieval Writings on Secular Women* (Penguin, 2011), esp. their introduction; Valerie L. Garver, *Women*



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*and Aristocratic Culture in the Carolingian World* (Cornell University Press, 2009), pp. 269-81; Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550* (Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> Jane Pilcher, *Age and Generation in Modern Britain* (Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 17-21; Alice S. Rossi, 'Life-Span Theories and Women's Lives', *Signs*, 6 (1980), 4-32, esp. pp. 7-8. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, uses the term 'life course' on p. 6 and 'life cycle' on p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Deborah Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe, c.1300-c.1500* (Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 33-4.

<sup>41</sup> Youngs, *The Life Cycle*, p. 20. For discussion of Jewish schemes see Michael E. Goodich, *From Birth to Old Age: The Human Life Cycle in Medieval Thought, 1250-1350* (University Press of America, 1989), pp. 62-3. Barbara Hanawalt used modern theories of child development to subdivide the early stages further (see essay 23).

<sup>42</sup> Shulamith Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages: 'Winter Clothes Us in Shadow and Pain'* (Routledge, 1997), p. 18.

<sup>43</sup> Mary Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 25.

<sup>44</sup> Kim M. Phillips, *Medieval Maidens: Young Women and Gender in England, 1270-1540* (Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 43-51. See also Kim M. Phillips, "Maidenhood as the Perfect Age of Woman's Life", in *Young Medieval Women*, eds. Katherine J. Lewis, Noël James Menuge and Kim M. Phillips (Sutton, 1999), pp. 1-24.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. this is the approach in Garver, *Women and Aristocratic Culture*.

<sup>46</sup> See Jo Ann McNamara and John E. Halborg with E. Gordon Whatley (ed. and trans.), *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 60-105.

<sup>47</sup> See Anthony Bale (trans.), *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> This essay revises her earlier, groundbreaking study: Judith Herrin, 'Women and the Faith in Icons in Early Christianity', in Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds), *Culture, Ideology and Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm* (Routledge, 1982), pp. 56-83.

<sup>49</sup> See Jennifer Kolpacoff Deane, 'Pious Domesticities', in Bennett and Karras (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender*, pp. 262-78.

<sup>50</sup> For key studies on the gendering of virginity see Clarissa W. Atkinson, "'Precious balsam in a fragile glass': The Ideology of Virginity in the Later Middle Ages", in *Journal of Family History*, 8:2 (1983), pp. 131-43; Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late*

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*Medieval England* (D.S. Brewer, 2001); Anke Bernau *et al.* (eds), *Medieval Virginites* (University of Toronto Press, 2003).

<sup>51</sup> For reappraisals of Clare's role in founding the movement see Lezlie S. Knox, *Creating Clare of Assisi: Female Franciscan Identities in Late Medieval Italy* (Brill, 2008), p. 4; Maria Pia Alberzoni, *Clare of Assisi and the Poor Sisters in the Thirteenth Century*, ed. Jean François Godet-Calogeras, trans. Nancy Celashi and William Short (Franciscan Institute Publications, 2004); Bert Roest, *Order and Disorder: The Poor Clares between Foundation and Reform* (Brill, 2013), ch. 1.

<sup>52</sup> See Anneke Mulder-Bakker (ed.), *Mary of Oignies: Mother of Salvation* (Brepols, 2006).

<sup>53</sup> See Suzanne Noffke (ed.), *Catherine of Siena: An Anthology*, 2 vols (Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012); Carolyn Muessig *et al.* (eds), *A Companion to Catherine of Siena* (Brill, 2012).

<sup>54</sup> See further Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (University of California Press, 1987).

<sup>55</sup> Martinus Cawley (ed.), *The Life of Ida of Louvain* (Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey, 2000), pp. 1-94.

<sup>56</sup> See Jennifer Deane, "'Beguienes' Reconsidered: Historiographical Problems and New Directions', *Monastic Matrix* (2008), Commentaria 3461, online at <<http://monasticmatrix.osu.edu/commentaria/beguines-reconsidered-historiographical-problems-and-new-directions>> (accessed 28 July 2016).

<sup>57</sup> See Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Barry Windeatt (Oxford University Press, 2015); Liz Herbert McAvoy (ed.), *A Companion to Julian of Norwich* (D.S. Brewer, 2008).

<sup>58</sup> In essay 41, Murray discusses how the virginal life for nuns might be re-read as 'akin to lesbianism'. For the concept 'lesbian-like' see Judith M. Bennett, "'Lesbian-Like" and the Social History of Lesbianisms', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 9:1/2 (2000), 1-24.

<sup>59</sup> Catherine M. Mooney, 'Voice, Gender, and the Portrayal of Sanctity', in Catherine M. Mooney (ed.), *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and their Interpreters* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 1-15.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Abels and Ellen Harrison, 'The Participation of Women in Languedocian Catharism', *Mediaeval Studies*, 41 (1979), 215-51.

<sup>61</sup> See further Peter Biller, 'Cathars and Material Women', in Peter Biller and A.J. Minnis (eds), *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body* (York Medieval Press, 1997), pp. 61-107.

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<sup>62</sup> See further Shannon McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy: Women and Men in Lollard Communities, 1420-1530* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

<sup>63</sup> Theresa Earenfight, 'Without the Persona of the Prince: Kings, Queens and the Idea of Monarchy in Late Medieval Europe', *Gender & History*, 19:1 (2007), 1-21, p. 2. Earenfight has since published *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

<sup>64</sup> E.g. see Pauline Stafford, 'Sons and Mothers: Family Politics in the Early Middle Ages', in Baker (ed.), *Medieval Women*, pp. 79-100; Louise Olga Fradenburg (ed.), *Women and Sovereignty* (University of Edinburgh Press, 1991); John Carmi Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship* (St Martin's Press, 1993); a number of the essays in John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (eds), *Medieval Mothering* (Garland, 1996); Anne J. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Boydell, 1997). Earenfight has compiled and updates an extensive bibliography on medieval queens at <<http://theresaearenfight.com/comprehensive-bibliography/>> (accessed 21 July 2016).

<sup>65</sup> Earenfight, 'Without the Persona of the Prince', pp. 3, 1.

<sup>66</sup> See also Linda E. Mitchell, 'The Lady is a Lord: Noble Widows and Land in Thirteenth-Century Britain', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions historiques*, 18:1 (1992), 71-97; Kimberley A. LoPrete, 'Women, Gender and Lordship in France, c.1050-1250', *History Compass*, 5/6 (2007), 1921-41; Steve Boardman, 'Lords and Women, Women as Lords: The Career of Margaret Stewart, Countess of Angus and Mar, c.1354-c.1418', in Steve Boardman and Julian Goodare (eds), *Kings, Lords and Men in Scotland and Britain, 1300-1625: Essays in Honour of Jenny Wormald* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 37-58.

<sup>67</sup> See further Lynda Garland, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527-1204* (Routledge, 1999) and Judith Herrin, *Women in Purple: Rulers of Medieval Byzantium* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004).

<sup>68</sup> E.g. see Armin Wolf, 'Reigning Queens in Medieval Europe: When, Where, and Why', in Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship*, pp. 169-88.

<sup>69</sup> For an overview of medieval Europe see Amalie Fößel, 'The Political Traditions of Female Rulership in Medieval Europe', in Bennett and Karras (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender*, pp. 68-83.

<sup>70</sup> E.g. see Jo Ann McNamara, 'Women and Power through the Family Revisited', in Erler and Kowaleski (eds), *Gendering the Master Narrative*, pp. 17-30, esp. pp. 24-8; Theresa

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Earnefight, *The King's Other Body: María of Castile and the Crown of Aragon* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

<sup>71</sup> See also Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple, 'The Power of Women through the Family in Medieval Europe, 500-1100', *Feminist Studies*, 1 (1973), 126-42; Stafford, 'Sons and Mothers'.

<sup>72</sup> E.g. see essays by Lois L. Huneycutt and John Carmi Parsons in Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean, *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women* (University of Illinois Press, 1995); Paul Strohm, 'Queens as Intercessors', in his *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-century Texts* (Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 95-119.

<sup>73</sup> Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (eds), *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (University of Georgia Press, 1988), p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> Erler and Kowaleski (eds), *Gendering the Master Narrative*, pp. 1-2; 'Beyond Women and Power: Looking Backward and Moving Forward', themed issue of *Medieval Feminist Forum*, 51:2 (2016), online at <<http://ir.uiowa.edu/mff/vol51/iss2/>> (accessed 25 July 2016).

<sup>75</sup> See Marie A. Kelleher, 'What do we mean by "Women and Power"?', *Medieval Feminist Forum*, 51:2 (2016), online at <<http://ir.uiowa.edu/mff/vol51/iss2/11/>> (accessed 25 July 2016).

<sup>76</sup> Women's economic activities have been another key area of enquiry (e.g. essays 53, 54). This topic will be discussed further below.

<sup>77</sup> David Herlihy, 'Land, Family and Women in Continental Europe, 701-1200', *Traditio*, 18 (1962), 89-120, p. 111; reprinted in Stuard (ed.), *Women in Medieval Society*. See now Constance H. Berman, 'Land, Family, and Women in Medieval Rome: Reassessing a Mentor's Classic Article', *Medieval Feminist Forum* 41:1 (2006), 64-74, online at <http://ir.uiowa.edu/mff/vol41/iss1/11> (date accessed 11 August 2015).

<sup>78</sup> As acknowledged in McNamara, 'Women and Power', p. 20. See further Susan Mosher Stuard, 'Brideprice, Dowry, and Other Marital Assigns', in Bennett and Karras (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender*, pp. 148-62. See essay 42 for a discussion of how the dowry system also affected poor women negatively.

<sup>79</sup> See Georges Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France*, trans. Elborg Forster (John Hopkins University Press, 1978); Georges Duby, *The Knight, the*

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*Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>80</sup> See LoPrete, 'Women, Gender and Lordship'; Joanna H. Drell, 'Aristocratic Economics', in Bennett and Karras (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender*, pp. 329-31.

<sup>81</sup> McNamara, 'Women and Power', p. 22.

<sup>82</sup> See Constance H. Berman, *Women and Monasticism in Medieval Europe: Sisters and Patrons of the Cistercian Reform* (Medieval Institute Publications, 2002), p. 2. Essay 8 also discusses the (not always correct) assumption that there is less documentation for women's abbeys than men's ones.

<sup>83</sup> See also Bruce L. Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890-1215* (Cornell University Press, 1997); Penelope D. Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (University of Chicago Press, 1991).

<sup>84</sup> See also Fiona J. Griffiths, "'Men's duty to provide for women's needs": Abelard, Heloise, and their negotiation of the *cura monialium*', *Journal of Medieval History*, 30:1 (2004), 1-24; John W. Coakley, *Women, Men and Spiritual Power: Female Saints and their Male Collaborators* (Columbia University Press, 2006).

<sup>85</sup> Olwen Hufton, 'Women in History. Early Modern Europe', *Past & Present*, 101 (1983), 125-41, at p. 126.

<sup>86</sup> Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), 383-414, at p. 402.

<sup>87</sup> See Maxine Berg, *A Woman in History: Eileen Power, 1889-1940* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 123-5.

<sup>88</sup> Eileen Power, *Medieval Women*, ed. M. M. Postan (Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 34.

<sup>89</sup> Berg, *A Woman in History*, p. 128.

<sup>90</sup> E.g. see Barbara A. Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (Oxford University Press, 1989), esp. ch. 13; cf. Judith M. Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock Before the Plague* (Oxford University Press, 1987), esp. ch. 5.

<sup>91</sup> Jeremy Goldberg, 'Some Reflections on Women, Work, and the Family in the Later Medieval English Town', in *Ser Mujer en la Ciudad Medieval Europea*, ed. J. Telechea, B.

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Bolumburu & A. Andrade (Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2012), pp. 191-214, esp. pp. 202-6.

<sup>92</sup> C. Barron, 'The "Golden Age" of Women in Medieval London' in *Reading Medieval Studies*, 15 (1989), 35-58.

<sup>93</sup> For more on the debate about pay see essay 52.

<sup>94</sup> See further P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire, c.1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992), esp. pp. 333-61. He argued that the situation in York, representing northwest Europe, was very different from that in Florence, representing Mediterranean Europe. Cf. Samuel K. Cohn Jr., 'Women and Work in Renaissance Italy', in Judith C. Brown and Robert C. Davis (eds), *Gender and Society in Renaissance Society* (Longman, 1998), pp. 107-26.

<sup>95</sup> Judith M. Bennett, 'Confronting Continuity', *Journal of Women's History*, 9:3 (1997), 73-94, at p. 86.

<sup>96</sup> See further Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>97</sup> E.g. Pamela Sharpe, 'Continuity and Change: Women's History and Economic History in Britain', *Economic History Review*, 48:2 (1995), 353-69.

<sup>98</sup> Joan Kelly, 'Did Women have a Renaissance?', in Bridenthall and Koonz (eds), *Becoming Visible*, pp. 137-64.

<sup>99</sup> Bennett, 'Confronting Continuity', p. 77.

<sup>100</sup> Kelly's essay was reprinted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Becoming Visible* (1987) but omitted from the 3<sup>rd</sup>. It was replaced by Carole Levin, 'Women in the Renaissance', with selective bibliography of responses to Kelly: R. Bridenthall *et al.* (eds), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Houghton Mifflin, 1998), pp. 169-70, n3.

<sup>101</sup> Phyllis Culham, 'Did Roman Women have an Empire?', in Mark Golden and Peter Toohey (eds), *Inventing Ancient Culture: Historicism, Periodization, and the Ancient World* (Routledge, 1997), pp. 192-204. See also, Colleen Seguin, 'Did Women Have a Reformation?', a review of Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), H-Net Reviews in the Humanities and Social Sciences, online at <<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=11402>> (date accessed 10 August 2015).